



Rocky Mountain Arsenal • Fall 2003

INSIDE

- 56th Avenue Construction Realigns Arsenal Fence
- Neighborhood News
- Fall Scene at RMA
- RMA Schedules Construction Of Enhanced Hazardous Waste Landfill
- Million Gallon Reservoir Scheduled For Demolition
- RMA Plans Well Closures Through 2005
- Section 36 BOA Soils Remediation Underway
- Mark Your Calendars For Refuge Week



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Oral Histories Bring RMA's Past To Life

To preserve Rocky Mountain Arsenal's (RMA) rich history, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has sought interviews with homesteaders and RMA workers to build an oral history collection of the site. More than 25 oral histories have been collected that detail the changing life on the land.

"We've conducted interviews with people who lived as homesteaders, worked here during WW II and the Cold War, or played a role in the cleanup decisions and the legislation creating the future Refuge," said Laurie Shannon, refuge planner. At this point, the Service is most interested in interviewing people who worked at RMA during WW II and the Cold War eras. "We're looking for information to enhance what we already have, particularly from people who worked on RMA, such as the manufacturing line," she explained.

A video-tape of interviews already collected plays at the Visitor Center and includes stories from men and women who grew up on RMA land and others who left all they owned to make way for the RMA's construction. Stories such as Robert Moffitt's, an early homesteader, make barn dances, grasshoppers, Pearl Harbor and security jobs on RMA come alive.

"My family came to the Arsenal property in 1919...Everything was different in the dust bowl days. It seemed like everything you did was

"My family came to the Arsenal property in 1919...Everything was different in the dust bowl days. It seemed like everything you did was futile...we had the weather practically destroying the western part of the U.S."

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"Long-term, we're interested in making a documentary about the history of RMA and feel the oral history interviews can really enrich that," Shannon said. "The personal part of people's stories makes the history interesting. It's not just about the nuts and bolts of making chemical munitions; it's hearing what it was like to work on the manufacturing line or how RMA workers were influenced by bigger cultural/social changes in the Denver area."

If you have a unique experience to share about the RMA, particularly during the WW II and Cold War eras, please contact Laurie Shannon at 303-289-0151. ■



Photo by DPRA, Inc./Josh Borchers

Construction to widen 56th Avenue along the southeast boundary of RMA.

56th Avenue Construction Realigns Arsenal Fence

RMA's fence line is being adjusted as part of the 56th Avenue construction project along the southeast boundary of RMA. The section between Pena Boulevard and Chambers Road was widened as a part of future construction to provide a six-lane roadway. The widening project started in June to improve the existing two-lane road and was completed in August. The planning and design process for widening 56th Avenue to six lanes between Pena Boulevard and Quebec Street will take approximately two years with construction anticipated to begin in 2006 or 2007.

"This is the last section of the 1940s road to be upgraded," said Tom Jackson, remedy coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The project will improve traffic flow and safety, and enhance access for Refuge visitors.

RMA worked with the Northeast Metro Win-Win Coalition (group of local business leaders) to coordinate utility and government groups' final needs along 56th Avenue. "We're

working with our neighbors to identify future urban expansion and associated infrastructure needs. We hope to identify a final alignment of our boundary fence and move it only once," said Ryan Noel, deputy refuge manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ■

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

Beginning May 31, 2003, Buckley Road from 80th Avenue to 56th Avenue will be permanently closed to vehicular traffic. Deteriorated road conditions and illegal activities such as dumping, wildlife poaching, and vandalism have made this action necessary. For more information, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (303) 289-0232.

Since RMA's Program Management Contract was awarded to Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation (FWEC) more than five years ago, the company has teamed with the surrounding communities to make significant contributions both financially and through volunteering in areas such as education, community health, the environment and youth organizations. The Program Management Contractor (PMC) consists of partners FWEC, Kellogg Brown and Root, Encison, Golder, and Hellmund Associates.

"We are pleased to have contributed more than \$200,000 to Montbello, Commerce City and other

communities near RMA plus our volunteers' time," said Joyce Waldroop, human resources/community investment manager for FWEC. "At least 50 percent of employees have volunteered for activities during events on- and off-site."

The PMC's outreach efforts include volunteering for the Adams County School District 14's Help One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) program. PMC volunteers commit to weekly mentoring sessions with a child to help increase reading skills. Not only do students experience positive reinforcement but volunteers enjoy their time with second and third grade students and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of these children.

Other programs include funding assistance for a homeless youth summer camp program that provides mentoring and opportunities to participate in interactive activities with other area youths as well as sponsoring the Commerce City Community Health Services' "Keep Me Safe" child car seat program. With PMC assistance, the "Keep Me Safe" program has grown from simply assisting with purchasing child car seats for needy families to providing free educational programs to families about car seat safety and how to correctly install a car seat to keep children safe.

"These programs are personally very rewarding to all of us within the PMC and we look forward to working with our RMA community neighbors for years to come," said Waldroop. ■



Photo by DPRA, Inc./Josh Borchers

Joyce Waldroop mentors Martin Villa of Kemp Elementary.

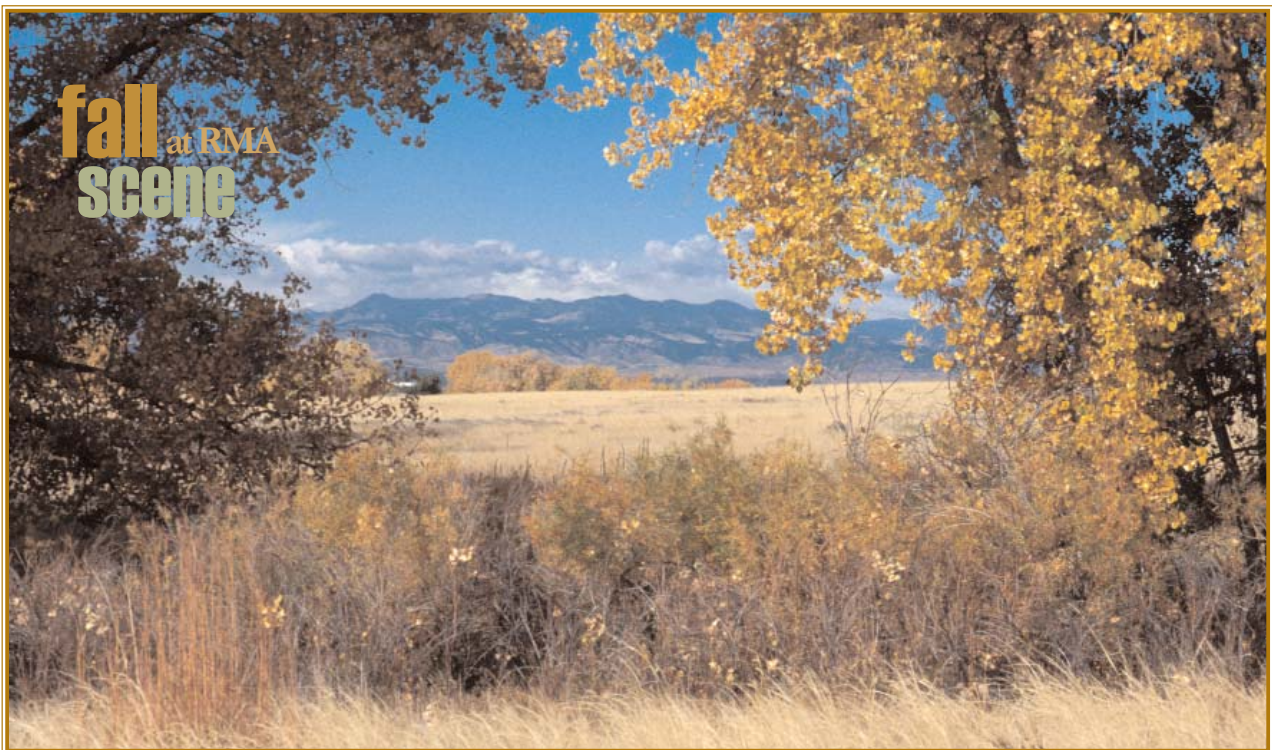


Photo by DPRA, Inc./Josh Borchers

M I L E S T O N E S

All photos by DPRA, Inc./Josh Barchers

RMA Schedules Construction of Enhanced Hazardous Waste Landfill

The RMA is ready to break ground in early October for a triple-lined enhanced hazardous waste landfill, pending funding availability. Consisting of two “cells,” or separate containment basins, the project will accept waste from the Basin F Waste Pile and the Lime Basins projects.



A fence is constructed around the future site of RMA's enhanced hazardous waste landfill.

“The landfill currently in use at RMA, as required for all hazardous waste landfills, has a double liner system,” said Leo Chen, technical representative for the RMA Remediation Venture Office. “Having a triple liner makes the landfill even more protective.” Chen noted that the new landfill will hold approximately 1 million cubic yards of waste. That’s enough to fill Denver’s Pepsi Center stadium by 40 percent. Construction of the landfill, located just south of the existing double-lined landfill in the north central part of RMA, is scheduled for completion in 2006. The landfill will be ready to receive waste that same year.

“The regulatory agencies will provide final approval before the landfill receives waste,” explained Chen. “The process for designing the landfill and receiving regulatory approval is similar to the process for the double-lined hazardous waste landfill. This one just has an additional lining as part of its construction.”

Like the double-lined landfill constructed at RMA, the enhanced hazardous waste landfill is being built to isolate waste from groundwater and other environmental pathways. The multi-layer lining represents the safest, most cost-effective and time-efficient option available for disposing of contaminants located on RMA. The landfill will only be used for disposing of waste originating from RMA and is expected to begin construction of its final cover starting sometime in 2008.

The triple-lined landfill’s project design was made available to the public at the 30 and 95 percent design phases. A 30-day public comment period was available at each design phase.

Million Gallon Reservoir Scheduled For Demolition

A million gallon reservoir, located just east of RMA’s Visitor Center, is scheduled for demolition in late October. The reservoir was built in 1942 as part of the original RMA utility system to store potable water (water that is safe for people to drink) before it was distributed for use throughout RMA. The reservoir has not stored water since 2001.

“We’re waiting until after the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Refuge Week celebration to start demolition,” said Lou Greer, RVO engineer. The celebration will take place at the RMA’s Visitor Center on October 18. “The work is scheduled to take about three to four weeks. It involves demolishing the structure, breaking the pieces down into smaller ones, removing the debris and then re-grading and re-seeding the site with native vegetation,” said Greer. Because the reservoir did not hold contaminated materials, the remains will be disposed of in RMA’s Basin A Consolidation Area.

Prior to the demolition, trees near the reservoir will be removed, as well as all electrical wiring for the reservoir. Because the electrical work involves turning off the water supply, the RMA Visitor Center will be closed the weekend of October 11 and 12. This is the only weekend when work is scheduled on this project that will affect visitation.

Other than the closed weekend, RMA employees and visitors will not be impacted during the demolition work. “We’ll have some equipment on-site for tearing down the structure, breaking up the materials and transporting them, but people won’t notice much activity,” explained Greer.

The reservoir demolition is part of Phase II of the Miscellaneous RMA Structures Demolition and Removal Project. Phase I was completed in 2000. Phase II began September 2003 and consists of demolishing structures that were once necessary to support some of the cleanup efforts. Phase III will begin in 2008 and will demolish all remaining structures that are no longer needed for the site’s transition to a national wildlife refuge.



The million gallon reservoir, which sits behind the Visitor Center, will be demolished in late October.



Wells are dismantled along RMA’s western perimeter.

RMA Plans Well Closures Through 2005

During 2003, RMA will close roughly 200 groundwater wells in various areas on- and off-site, beginning with 56 wells in sections adjacent to Highway 2, along RMA’s northwest boundary. Another 400 wells are slated for closure in 2004 and 2005.

“We’re closing these wells because they’re no longer needed for RMA’s monitoring networks,” said Neville Gaggiani, hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) who is working with the Remediation Venture Office (RVO) water team. Groundwater contamination levels have been significantly reduced from years of active cleanup, therefore many wells are no longer necessary. “Over the next several years, we’ll be checking and reverifying our monitoring needs as the remedy progresses. Any excess wells will be candidates for closure as funding becomes available.”

Since the 1980s, RMA has drilled more than 3,000 wells to test and monitor chemical compounds in the groundwater in various areas of RMA as well as areas north and west of RMA, extending to the South Platte River. The RVO water team used the wells to determine the condition of the ground water, both on-post and off-post. “We have a good idea of what’s going on now and that’s why we don’t need as many wells,” Gaggiani explained.

The well closures are phased over the next several years because of funding limitations. This year’s projected closures are located near the site’s north and northwestern boundary, as well as some additional wells off-site located north and west of RMA. “While we have reduced the numbers in our well networks, RMA will still monitor more than 800 groundwater wells,” added Gaggiani. “We’re starting with wells in the area along Quebec Street because this area has been removed from the Environmental Protection Agency’s National Priorities List and is available for transfer later this year. Wells for possible closure in the monitoring networks are reviewed every year. So, as the remediation continues, even more wells may be closed in the future.”

Section 36 BOA Soils Remediation Underway

July marked the start of Phase I for soil remediation work in Section 36 Balance of Areas (BOA) project. This remediation work consists of shallow soil removal; removal of the chemical sewer and surrounding soils; demolition of two buildings and associated facilities including a parking lot, decontamination pad and tanks; and, revegetating areas once the work is complete. Phase I will be completed in March 2004.

Phase II will start immediately after Phase I is completed and involves minor reshaping and re-contouring of remediation areas and final revegetation. This work will be completed by September 2004.

The soil removed during Phase I will be placed in either the Basin A Consolidation Area or the double-lined hazardous waste landfill, depending on the contamination levels.

The Section 36 BOA’s project design was made available to the public at the 30 and 95 percent design phases. The public was also informed about significant changes to this project due to new information that resulted in a change of the excavation volume. There was a 30-day public comment period for each design phase as well as the change in volume.

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Mark Your Calendars for Refuge Week!

Saturday, October 18, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is gearing up for its annual Refuge Week Celebration scheduled for **Saturday, October 18 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** at the Visitor Center. This free one-day event wraps up a year of celebrating the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial and includes a day of activities in honor of the National Wildlife Refuge Week.

"We'll have booths, interactive educational games and wildlife viewing tours. The trails will be open plus all of the usual fun activities will be available at the Visitor Center," said Sherry James, supervisory park ranger. "The wildlife learning lab will be open and we'll have live birds on display. There will be much more to see and do than is offered during the normal weekend drop-in programs. We're hoping to have close to 1,000 visitors." Parking will be available at the west gate and shuttles will run non-stop throughout the day.

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society will host the Blue Stem Banquet to kick off Refuge Week on October 10. The banquet will include a silent auction fundraiser for the Refuge and its environmental education programs. John Steinle will give a portrayal of the first Refuge Manager, Paul Kroegel, who managed Pelican Island, Florida, the first National Wildlife Refuge. Community members interested in attending the event or donating items for the silent auction should call the Wildlife Society at 303-289-0820.

If you are interested in attending the Refuge Week Celebration and would like more information, please call the Visitor Center at 303-289-0930. You also can contact the Visitor Center if you would like to be on the Refuge's mailing list to receive information about upcoming programs and events. ■

M I L E S T O N E S

Comments are always welcome.

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